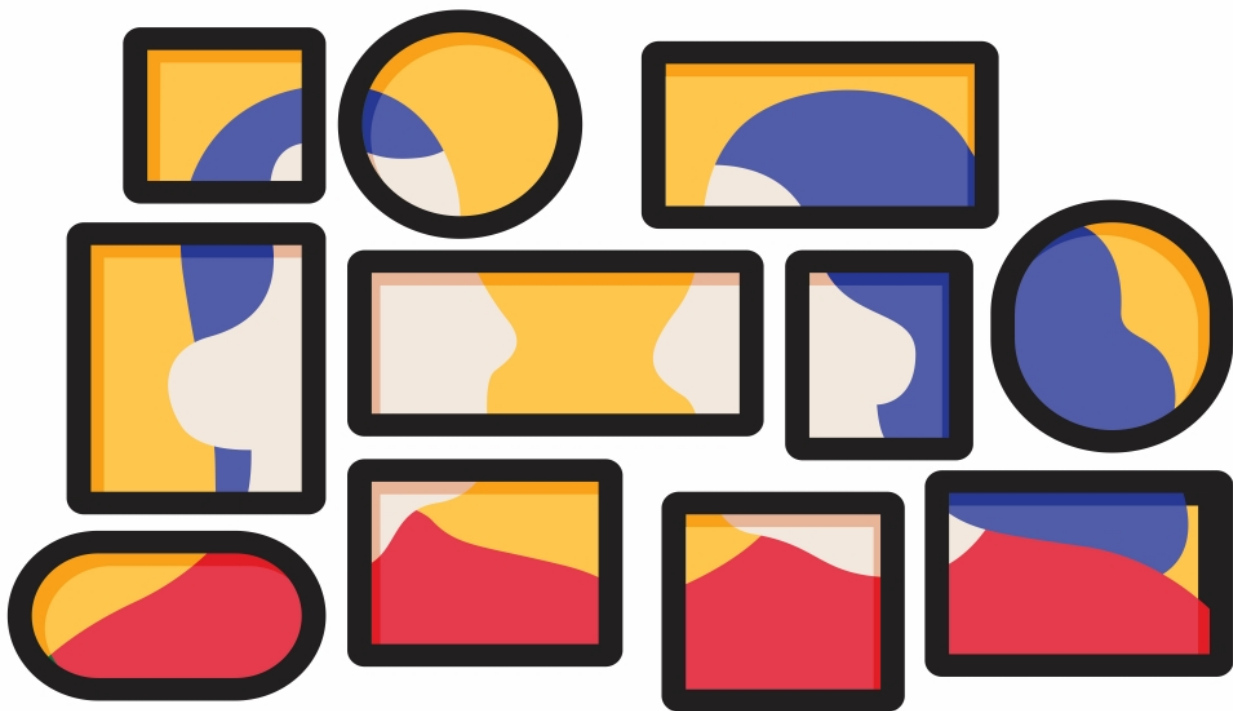


Building blocks for healthy alliance coordination

The case of a healthcare alliance contains lessons for how partners can better coordinate their activities, improve joint performance and create value.



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A 60-year-old man went to his general practitioner (GP) and was referred for tests at the hospital, where they determined he had respiratory failure. They prescribed oxygen therapy. The patient met with the rep who would be delivering oxygen tanks to his home and training him on how to use them. At home, the man received follow-up visits from a caregiver who monitored his progress. This was, essentially, an alliance — an organizational arrangement whereby various partners combined their resources and capabilities to create value in a way that none of them could do alone. And depending on how capable the partners were at coordinating their activities, value might or might not be created.

In this real-life scenario — the subject of our research — we detected some coordination issues that meant value was being lost. For instance, relevant information gathered at the patient's home was known by distributors but not by GPs, some of whom were not even aware that their patients were receiving the treatment. What's more, some patients continued to receive the treatment when it was no longer needed, just because no one at the hospital had decided to stop it. This illustrates that, even with a seemingly straightforward process, alliances won't realize their full potential if the partners don't learn to coordinate their activities effectively.

In this article, we examine the building blocks of interorganizational coordination. We present a framework to help managers think differently about the microcomponents of alliances. We illustrate it with one study of a healthcare partnership in Barcelona. By seeing where knowledge is being lost or where new routines are being created in novel or unexpected ways, readers may discern how to boost the performance of their alliances.

The full article is published in [IESE Insight 36 \(Q1 2018\)](#).

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